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United States  
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# **Selected Speeches and News Releases**

**June 13 - June 19, 1991**

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# News Releases

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## COMPUTERS CUT WEED CHEMICALS, PROTECT GROUNDWATER

WASHINGTON, June 13—U.S. corn growers could save a billion dollars a year on herbicides if a new weed-predicting computer program meets goals set for it, said R. Dean Plowman, administrator of the Agricultural Research Service, the chief scientific agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The experimental program is called the Corn-Weed-Bioeconomic Model. It was developed by ARS plant physiologist Edward E. Schweizer and Colorado State University economist Donald W. Lybecker.

The model is the first to link weed-killing costs to profits in irrigated corn farming, said Schweizer, with the ARS Natural Resources Research Center in Ft. Collins, Colo.

Over the past two growing seasons, 15 Colorado farmers used the computer's recommendations on irrigated cornfields. Schweizer said the farmers got the same yields after cutting herbicide use by an average 40 percent before planting seed and about 15 percent for the whole season. The farmers are joining the study again this year.

"Our goal is to cut yearly herbicide use by 15 to 20 percent," said Schweizer. "That could translate into saving corn growers \$15 per acre.

"We still have to refine and test the model to apply to nonirrigated as well as irrigated corn throughout the country. Then, if every corn grower used it, herbicide use on corn could drop 45 million pounds a year."

Plowman said that a \$15 savings on each of the roughly 70 million acres of U.S. corn would amount to total annual savings of just over a billion dollars. "With research like this, which finds ways to use less pesticides, we can reduce the threat of chemicals accidentally seeping into our groundwater," he said.

The computer work indicates "we can stop rating a farmer's ability to make money on how weed-free his fields are," said Schweizer.

"Sometimes weedier fields can be more profitable."

That can happen, he explained, if a farmer's savings on herbicide and its application cost exceed the value of a yield loss—if there is any—from greater weed competition.



Herbicide use in corn fields accounts for almost half of all pesticides used on major field crops in the U.S., Schweizer said. He and Lybecker plan to refine the model to handle crop rotations that include corn, pinto beans, barley and sugarbeets.

The computer program is “one of a growing number of new weapons we hope to unleash against weeds,” said Joe Antognini, ARS’ national program leader for weed control, based in Beltsville, Md. “It joins the ranks of beneficial insects we have imported to eat weeds, pathogens being developed to control weeds and other ways we have found to cut chemical use.”

Schweizer said the model could become “a user-friendly package that computer-owning farmers could use someday.”

He and Lybecker undertook four years of field studies to collect data for the program, including herbicide cost, crop value and number of weeds and weed seeds present in soil samples.

Weeds are kept to a tolerable level by counting the weed seeds in soil samples. This count is entered into the computer to determine if herbicide applications are warranted at planting time.

Dennis Senft (415) 559-6068

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## **TIPS FOR A SAFE FOURTH OF JULY PICNIC**

WASHINGTON—No Fourth of July observance would be complete without the traditional great American picnic! But the U.S. Department of Agriculture warns that if proper care is not taken, food can spoil very quickly, and a special holiday celebration can be needlessly ruined.

Here are some tips from USDA to help you prevent foodborne illness on your holiday picnic.

**PLAN AHEAD**—All perishable foods to be taken to a picnic should be thoroughly chilled first and then placed directly into the cooler. Frozen food should also be kept in the cooler.

All preparation areas, utensils and hands must be kept clean before and after handling raw meat and poultry, to prevent the spread of bacteria to other foods. Take disposable wiping cloths on picnics for cleaning your hands, and a jug of water and soap for the cooking utensils.

**BRING ALONG THE COOLER**—Bring a well-insulated cooler with plenty of ice to protect perishable food for the longest possible time. Keep the cooler in a cool place—not in a hot car trunk or in direct sunlight. Keep the lid on to retain the cold air. Avoid repeated openings. If the ice begins to melt, replenish it if possible.

**FOODS TO TAKE ALONG**—Perishable foods such as home-cooked meat and poultry, potato salad, cole slaw, and deviled eggs need more care than other foods but can be taken on picnics safely with proper care. Just remember to keep these perishable foods cold. Commercially pre-cooked and ready-to-eat meats and poultry are also good choices, as are canned meat and poultry.

Foods containing mayonnaise can be taken safely on picnics. Contrary to popular belief, mayonnaise is not a food-safety villain, and actually can control bacterial growth. Just make sure you use commercially made mayonnaise, since it is pasteurized.

Hot foods, too, can be brought along on picnics. Use a thermos or insulated dish to keep these foods hot. Hot foods should be held at 140 degrees F or above, and should be served quickly after removed from heat.

Remember that no perishable food should be left at room temperature for more than two hours, or more than just one hour in an outside temperature above 85 degrees F.

If you take along raw meat and poultry for cooking on a grill at the picnic site, make sure you cook it thoroughly: juices should run clear, and no pink meat should show. Keep these items cold until ready for grilling. Raw meat juices should not touch other food. Frozen hamburger patties or chicken are okay, too; just allow extra time to cook completely. Use clean plates for serving.

**DON'T TAKE PARTIALLY COOKED FOODS**—Taking foods partially cooked for further cooking at a holiday picnic is an open invitation to food contamination. Instead, completely cook your food ahead of time and refrigerate it thoroughly before packing the cooler, or take raw food, kept cold, for complete cooking at the site.

**HANDLING LEFTOVERS**—To maximize food safety, try to plan your picnic so there are no leftovers. Perishable foods that have been out for no longer than an hour should be packed in ice in the cooler. Put the cooler in the passenger cabin of the car for the trip back home. Car trunks can get very hot.



Overall, keep this in mind about leftovers: When in doubt, throw it out! It's better to throw away the perishables from the Fourth than take a chance on getting sick on the fifth.

If you have any questions about summer food safety, call USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555. Callers in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area should dial (202) 447-3333. Hotline hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern time weekdays.

The Hotline is a service of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service. FSIS and its 9,000 employees are dedicated to ensuring that meat and poultry products are safe, wholesome, and accurately labeled.

Susan Conley (202) 447-3333

Issued June 13, 1991

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## **USDA PROPOSES PROVISIONS OF MARKETING CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS FOR UPLAND COTTON**

WASHINGTON, June 13—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking public comment on proposals for implementation of the Upland Cotton First Handler Marketing Certificate Program and the Upland Cotton User Marketing Certificate Program for 1991-1995 marketing years, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990, extended the authority, originally added by the Food Security Act of 1985, for a first handler marketing certificate program through July 31, 1996. CCC proposes to implement this program in a manner similar to the way in which it was operated during the 1986 marketing year except that the first handler certificates may be exchanged for any commodity made available by CCC.

Certificates issued under the 1986 program could be exchanged for upland and extra long staple cotton only. The proposal covers details concerning eligible cotton, eligible first handlers, the upland cotton first handler agreement, commodity certificates, payments and payment rates.

The 1990 Act includes a new competitiveness provision for upland cotton requiring the issuance of marketing certificates to qualifying domestic users/exporters on purchases/sales made during the week following a consecutive four-week period in which the lowest-priced U.S.



growth of cotton quoted for delivery in northern Europe (U.S. Northern Europe price) exceeds the average of the cheapest five growths of cotton quoted for delivery in northern Europe (Northern Europe price) by more than 1.25 cents per pound in each of the four weeks.

With regard to the User Marketing Certificate Program, CCC proposes that:

- Eligible cotton be domestically produced upland cotton baled lint, including Below Grade cotton, which is purchased by an eligible domestic user or sold for export by an eligible exporter under a written contract entered into between Aug. 1, 1991 and July 31, 1996, inclusive, during a Friday through Thursday period in which a payment rate is in effect and which is delivered or exported not later than Sept. 30, 1996.

- An eligible domestic user/exporter would be anyone, including a producer or approved cooperative marketing association, regularly engaged in purchasing/selling eligible cotton who has entered into an agreement with CCC to participate in the program.

- The payment rate would be based on the amount that the U.S. Northern Europe price exceeds the Northern Europe price by more than 1.25 cents per pound during the fourth week of a consecutive four-week period in which the U.S. Northern Europe price exceeded the Northern Europe price by more than 1.25 cents per pound. During the period when both current and forward shipment prices are available, it is proposed that two payment rates be determined. The proposal details how such payment rates would be established and applied.

- The payment would be made on documented sales and exports made during the week following the consecutive 4-week period.

- The date of the written contract for purchase/sale of the cotton by the domestic user/exporter would be used as the date for determining the payment rate.

- The weight for payment would be based, for domestic users, on the net weight on which settlement for payment was based and, for exporters, on the original warehouse weight, the gin weight if the cotton was not placed in a warehouse, or on the reweight if the exporter paid the cost of reweighing.

- Payment would be made after the cotton is received by the domestic user or after a bill of lading is issued for exported cotton.

- Payments would be made in the form of commodity certificates that could be exchanged for commodities made available by CCC.

—Eligible domestic users and exporters would have to enter into an Upland Cotton Domestic User/Exporter Agreement with CCC in order to participate in the program.

Details will appear in the June 18 Federal Register. Comments must be received by July 1 and will be available for public inspection in Room 3760 of USDA's South Building during regular business hours.

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-8206

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## **USDA RESEARCH HELPS TO “BREATHE LIFE” INTO RURAL AMERICA**

WASHINGTON—In 1988, Loren Larson's job search and a federal report on dietary fiber crossed paths. What linked them together was a federal law which has helped bring more U.S. Department of Agriculture research to the marketplace—and, in this case, that “linkage” enhanced job growth in rural America.

The law in question is the Federal Technology Transfer Act of 1986. According to Ruxton H. Villet, national program leader for product utilization for USDA's Agricultural Research Service in Beltsville, Md., that law enables private companies to receive exclusive licenses on products and technologies worked on in federal labs—such as those labs run by ARS.

So what does all this have to do with Larson?

He hadn't had much luck in the job market in Cambridge, Minn. His first job after graduating from college had ended after only nine months. His skills as a lab technician—analyzing drinking water and wastewater—didn't seem to be in demand in Cambridge, a suburb of Minneapolis.

That changed when Canadian Harvest USA, a new company in town, began making dietary fiber in 1988. It began distributing that product in February 1989 and, shortly thereafter, Larson got a job at the company as a wastewater analyst.

Meanwhile, another chain of events was unfolding that would have an impact on the success of that product—and on ARS's involvement in that success.



A few years earlier, in 1985, the National Cancer Institute released a report which recommended that Americans double their intake of fiber. However, objections about the taste of fiber blocked the way to the wholehearted acceptance of that substance by U.S. consumers.

Therefore, scientists with ARS's National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research in Peoria, Ill., began to expand their studies on a process they were developing to make dietary fiber more palatable.

"Brans high in fiber from corn, wheat and oats were being rejected by consumers because of their gritty textures and strong flavors," said Lee B. Dexter, technical manager for Canadian Harvest USA and a former employee at ARS's Peoria center.

J. Michael Gould, then an ARS chemist at the Peoria center, was working on a process to improve fiber from corn, oats and wheat. Once treated with alkaline hydrogen peroxide, the fiber became a creamy, smooth source of dietary fiber—known as fluffy cellulose—that could be added to foods.

In 1983 Gould applied for the first of four patents on the alkaline hydrogen peroxide process. He hired Dexter to help with the food project, and they were co-inventors on the third patent describing uses of peroxide-treated materials in foods.

In March 1991 Gould and Brian K. Jasberg, ARS chemical engineer at the Peoria center, were awarded a fourth patent. Jasberg worked out the "recipes" for adding fluffy cellulose to food formulas.

"You can't just dump fluffy cellulose into a recipe in place of flour without adjusting variables like water and other ingredients," Jasberg said. "Food systems are too complicated. If one thing changes, everything else has to change accordingly."

As a direct result of the ARS research—and because of the provisions of the Federal Technology Transfer Act—DuPont, a chemical company headquartered in Wilmington, Del., licensed the technology from three of the USDA patents. DuPont and ConAgra, a diversified food company headquartered in Omaha, Neb., then jointly formed Canadian Harvest USA.

Today the company sells its brand of oat fiber. It is used in dough and batter formulations for cakes, pancakes, pie crusts, and other baked goods as a substitute for flour.

Carsten H. Seecamp, Cambridge's part-time mayor, said that, "We needed to diversify our economy and provide more jobs for our working population." About 40 percent commute to jobs in Minneapolis.



“We’re very pleased to have Canadian Harvest USA in Cambridge,” Seecamp said. “Their industry has fit in very nicely with our community.”

“Other success stories like the one in Cambridge that led to Larson’s employment will be written, thanks to the Federal Technology Transfer Act,” Villet said.

ARS now has more than 150 cooperative research and development agreements in place with industrial partners. Last year, ARS issued 26 licenses, from which four new businesses were established, reported Villet.

As a federal research agency, “ARS wants to see its discoveries taken up by businesses to ‘breathe life’ into rural America,” he said.

Linda Cooke (309) 685-4011

Issued: June 14, 1991

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## **COMPLETED USDA DAIRY STUDY REVEALS MARKET FORCES AND MADIGAN INITIATIVES HELP STOP DECLINE IN DAIRY PRICES**

WASHINGTON, June 14—The U.S. Department of Agriculture delivered its Dairy Study to Congress today which indicates that of the four major supply control options examined, none meet the goals laid out by Congress better than the 1990 Food Security Act dairy program.

The study was undertaken in compliance with the FACT Act. Secretary Edward Madigan advanced the completion date of the study by six weeks due to his concerns about the deteriorating dairy price situation. Madigan also took immediate interim actions announced on May 10 to affect dairy prices. They included:

- Advanced purchases in Fiscal Year 1991 for FY 1992 school lunch and feeding programs.

- Made dairy products fully available for export credit and aid programs in addition to expanding the Dairy Export Incentive Program.

- Expanded use of dairy products in Section 416 donation program, and

- Other regulatory initiatives to enhance dairy sales.

Since these actions, dairy prices have risen. “We are pleased with the recent trend of increasing dairy prices, due to a combination of USDA

actions and the market driven decisions of many dairy farmers,” said Madigan.

Dairy production for April 1991 is up less than 1 percent over last year at this time, compared to a 4-percent year-over-year increase in the fourth quarter of 1990. Dairy cow slaughter through May is up almost 3 percent from a year ago, and the number of cows in the U.S. dairy herd is declining. Prices are expected to continue to rise into autumn as production and demand come into balance.

“The Administration is committed to working with Congress, farmers and the dairy industry to ensure that current dairy price trends do not recede,” said Madigan.

Madigan noted that two other studies are underway regarding dairy. One is aimed at evaluating the Minnesota-Wisconsin price series which acts to move dairy prices nationwide. The other is aimed at examining the entire marketing order system. Marketing orders influence regional prices and movement of dairy products.

“It may be wise for Congress to examine all of these issues together upon completion of all three reports,” said Madigan, “rather than legislate another piecemeal approach.”

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-8206

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## **USDA INCREASES FEE FOR INSPECTION SERVICES FOR PROCESSED PRODUCTS**

WASHINGTON, June 17—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is increasing fees for certain voluntary, industry-requested inspection, grading and certification of processed fruits and vegetables, effective June 18.

Daniel Haley, administrator of USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service, said the increase raises the basic hourly rate charged users who have not signed term contracts for these services from the current \$31 to \$34.50, and the overtime basic hourly fee from \$7 to one-half the hourly rate. The hourly rate for copying inspection documents increases from the \$31 to \$34.50.

For those having signed term contracts, the hourly charges rise as follows:



—From \$25 to \$29 for yearly in-plant full-time services, i.e., services of a minimum of 40 hours per week.

—From \$28 to \$34.50 for full-time in-plant services for less than a year's duration, and of more than four week's duration.

Plants using the services for fewer than four weeks per year are charged the non-contract hourly rate, \$34.50, Haley said.

Increased costs in the last year necessitated the changes, Haley said. Authority for such changes is in the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, which requires that fees be reasonable, and as nearly as possible, cover the cost of rendering services.

Notice of the increases will appear as a final rule in the June 18 Federal Register. Copies and further information may be obtained from Raymondo O'Neal USDA, AMS, Fruit and Vegetable Division, Processed Products Branch, Room 0723-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456; telephone (202) 447-5021.

Carolyn Coutts (202) 447-8998

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## **MADIGAN NAMES FIVE MEMBERS TO NATIONAL PORK BOARD**

WASHINGTON, June 18—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced five appointments to the 15-member National Pork Board. They will serve three-year terms.

The five were chosen from eight pork producers nominated by the National Pork Producers Delegate Body in Denver, Colo., March 7-9.

Newly appointed producers are Roy L. Strange, Moultrie, Ga; Joan M. Keever, Piper City, Ill.; and Donald D. Benson, Hurley, S. Dak. Reappointed are producers Allen A. Keppy, Wilton, Iowa.; and Rodger D. Sturgis, Enid, Miss.

Established under the Pork Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Act of 1985, the National Pork Board has developed budgets and awarded contracts to carry out a coordinated program designed to strengthen the position of pork in the marketplace.

The program is funded by a mandatory assessment of one-quarter of one percent of the market value of all hogs sold in the United States and an equivalent amount on imported hogs, pork and pork products. Assessments began Nov. 1, 1986.



One-third of the board members are appointed each year. The initial board was appointed in 1986.

Rebecca Unkenholz (202) 447-8998

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## **SCIENTISTS FASHION MEDLEY OF STRATEGIES TO WHIP WEEDS**

WASHINGTON—You can hack them to pieces with an axe or you can bury them in the ground for half a century: weeds still come back to haunt farmer and gardener alike.

A recent survey of weed control specialists from across the country fingered some of the foulest field and yard invaders in the nation. “These may be farm weeds,” says Joe Antognini, national program leader for weed science in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Research Service, “but as suburbia moves closer to agricultural areas, homeowners find themselves battling these same weeds in their yards. You can’t stop the wind or birds from moving the seeds.”

What follows are some of the nasty weeds on the survey’s “hit list” and strategies ARS scientists are pursuing to fight weeds on farms—meaning fewer seeds later spreading to front yards.

- Field bindweed, described by one researcher as an “out-of-control morningglory,” infests all states except Florida, Alaska and Hawaii. Its roots thrust downward six feet or more. Its seeds can lie dormant and threatening for decades.

ARS scientists are trying out a microscopic mite from the Mediterranean, *Aceria malherbae*. The mite gnaws the leaves of field bindweed. Thousands of the mites were released in 1989 at test sites in New Jersey and Texas. They have survived and reproduced there, as a first step to see if they whip this viny weed.

- Annual morningglories, kissing cousins to field bindweed, also have been targeted by ARS scientists. Various members of the morningglory family infest about 174 million acres of the United States. But ARS microbiologist Robert J. Kremer has identified several strains of rootdwelling bacteria called rhizobacteria that will attack morningglories and other weeds. These bacteria break down the weed root’s cell walls or deliver toxins to the weed’s leaves.

- Kremer's microbes also work wonders against another nasty weed, velvetleaf. Farmers spend about \$350 million annually to keep it out of their crops, particularly corn, soybeans and cotton.

Kremer's soil bacteria could someday help slash those outlays.

Greenhouse tests show one strain of rhizobacteria reduced the leafy topgrowth of two-week-old velvetleaf seedlings by 88 percent. That same strain also left seedling taproots at less than half the length of those on bacteria-free seedlings. Shorter roots mean less water and nutrients can be taken in to nourish the plant, reducing its chances of living.

- Nutsedge is another unwelcome occupant in farmers' fields. Also known as nutgrass, this perennial weed-like grass costs farmers millions of dollars annually to control.

ARS plant physiologist Chester G. McWhorter says farmers can get more bang for their chemical bucks, at least against purple nutsedge, by adding inorganic salts to the herbicides MSMA and glyphosate. MSMA and glyphosate are unreliable and expensive, according to McWhorter. But tests in infested cotton and soybean fields have shown that adding salts such as aluminum chloride to the herbicides can boost control of the weed by as much as 50 percent.

- Pigweed may have a cute name, but corn and soybean farmers aren't laughing. This weed has been tagged by the weed control specialists as one of the most troublesome for its damage in a wide assortment of crops.

Happily, pigweed seems vulnerable to natural chemicals from such common plants as sunflowers and sorghum. ARS laboratory tests have found that populations of pigweed decline sharply when planted alongside germinating sorghum, for example.

What's happening, scientists say, is allelopathy—a natural process in which certain chemicals released by the plants release toxic chemicals against neighboring plants, in this case pigweeds. Further research on such compounds could eventually lead to breeding crops that manufacture the allelopathic substances on their own. Also, researchers might copy these compounds to produce bioherbicides that are easy on the environment.

- Canada thistle, a native of Eurasia, is very difficult to control because of its deep root system. Breaking up the roots only serves to increase the number of plants. And just two Canada thistles per square yard can reduce grain yields by 15 percent.



But ARS scientists have devised a sequence of herbicide treatments that can wither Canada thistle numbers. In tests, three years of the sequence of glyphosate, bromoxynil and MCPA cut thistle numbers from about 30 per square yard to only one. All three herbicides are approved by the Environmental Protection Agency.

- Common lambsquarters can grow up to six feet tall, but ARS scientists say the battle may be won or lost in the first inch of soil. Chemist Robert E. Wing says herbicides are more likely to come in contact with—and work against—lambsquarters' roots and seeds when the chemicals are held closer to the soil surface.

Wing and others have experimented with encapsulating herbicides in starch for slow release of the compounds in the critical upper soil zone. When water was added to simulate irrigation, the starch-encapsulated herbicides stayed in that area, compared with regular herbicides that soaked down five to six inches in the soil.

Sandy Miller Hays (301) 344-4089

Issued June 18, 1991

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## **WIND EROSION DAMAGES NEARLY 8.2 MILLION ACRES IN 1990-91**

WASHINGTON, June 18—Wind erosion has damaged nearly 8.2 million acres in the Great Plains during the November-through-May wind erosion season, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said today.

“This is about 400,000 acres more than last year’s 7.8 million acres,” said William Richards, chief of USDA’s Soil Conservation Service.

“Much of this damage is due to the prolonged drought which resulted in insufficient cover,” said Richards. “One windstorm on March 12 in Kansas damaged nearly 1.7 million acres.”

Richards said many farmers in the Great Plains used emergency tillage—roughening the surface—to prevent erosion damage where there was enough moisture. This season, 2,386,924 acres were reported to have received emergency tillage, about 130,000 acres more than last year.

Nearly 17 million acres were reported in condition to blow, slightly above the previous season. Crops or cover were destroyed on 892,890



acres. This is about 30 percent more than last year, and 70,000 acres less than average.

The northern Great Plains reported 2,828,137 acres damaged. Although above the average of 2,128,000 acres, this damage was less than 50 percent of last year's total of 5,321,847 acres. North Dakota, however, reported 1,443,481 acres damaged, nearly double its average of 794,000 acres.

Nearly 91 percent of the total land damaged was cropland, with the rest mostly rangeland. SCS reports land damaged when small mounds or drifts of soil are observed, or blown soil covers vegetation. SCS conducts its survey during the wind erosion season in 541 counties in the Great Plains states.

A state-by-state summary of estimated land damaged during the wind erosion season between Nov. 1, 1990, and May 31, 1991, follows. For comparison, information is also provided for the same period a year ago.

**Wind Erosion Damage, November 1990 to May 1991**

**Estimated Acres Damaged**

	Nov. 1990-May 1991	Nov. 1989-May 1990
Northern Great Plains:		
Montana	803,871	1,249,665
Nebraska	199,465	130,115
North Dakota	1,443,481	2,932,687
South Dakota	233,990	601,830
Wyoming	147,330	407,550
SUBTOTAL	2,828,137	5,321,847
Southern Great Plains:		
Colorado	1,043,995	273,731
Kansas	2,024,410	189,600
New Mexico	480,520	248,500
Oklahoma	134,180	136,800
Texas	1,669,878	1,668,000
SUBTOTAL	5,352,983	2,516,631
TOTAL	8,181,120	7,838,478

Ned Kupelian (202) 447-5776

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## U.S. EXTENSION SPECIALISTS BEGIN ASSIGNMENTS IN POLAND

WASHINGTON, June 18—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan said today that 13 U.S. agricultural extension specialists have begun assignments in Poland as part of continuing U.S. efforts to aid Poland in establishing an efficient, privatized agricultural economy.

Madigan said the specialists will be stationed in Poland for six months to three years to help strengthen the organization, staffing and programs of Poland's Advisory Services—the country's analog of the U.S. Cooperative Extension Service.

“Our goal is to help the Advisory Services function as an effective educational system for the country's private farmers, agribusinesses, and rural communities,” Madigan said.

The program is financed by the U.S. Agency for International Development, and is budgeted at \$2.5 million for fiscal 1991.

During the next six months, 10 of the U.S. specialists will be stationed in rural communities in Poland. The other three will be stationed for three years in Warsaw. The specialists will work with communities, farmers and Polish producer associations.

The assignment of the U.S. extension specialists in Poland is the result of a U.S. Department of Agriculture technical assistance mission to the country in February 1990. That mission, lead by Dr. Myron D. Johnsrud, administrator of the USDA's Extension Service, focused on determining Polish needs in agricultural education and technical assistance as applied to private farm production and marketing.

The U.S. Extension specialists serving six-month assignments in Poland are: John Cunningham and Wayne Hansen, University of Minnesota; George Greaser and Jay Irwin, Pennsylvania State University; George Young and Gregg Hodges; Alabama Cooperative Extension Service; Bill Miller, University of Georgia; Bruce Sorter, Maryland Cooperative Extension Service; Charles Rust, Montana State University; and Patricia White, Maryland Cooperative Extension. Specialists serving three-year assignments are: John Ragland and Lee Meyer, University of Kentucky; and John Burton, Auburn University.

Janet Poley (202) 447-3029

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## NEW "BROTH" FOR FOOD PATHOGENS SIMPLIFIES TESTS FOR PROCESSED MEATS

WASHINGTON, June 19—Food processors could soon have a simpler, cheaper way to begin routine tests of hot dogs and other processed meats as a safeguard against two major food-poisoning bacteria, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture researchers.

Before testing whether *Salmonella* and *Listeria* are present, processors now incubate samples of the product for 24 hours in separate "broths" or growth media for each bacterium.

Microbiologists Joseph S. Bailey and Nelson A. Cox of USDA's Agricultural Research Service have developed a growth medium that makes it possible to incubate both bacteria together.

"Switching to the new growth medium could save processors \$5 million to \$7 million a year in conducting food-safety tests, with no loss in accuracy," said Bailey.

The incubating periods are needed to revive bacteria injured but not killed by heating or other methods that make processed meats free of harmful bacteria, Bailey said.

"If processors didn't do this, small numbers of bacteria could go undetected in the safety test," he said.

Separate broth media are used currently, Bailey said, "because what's good for *Salmonella* is bad for *Listeria*, and vice versa." The new medium permits both bacteria to multiply "so that if either one is present in a food sample, it'll be easier to detect," he said.

Each year, the food industry runs about seven million tests for *Salmonella* and four million for *Listeria*. "With the new medium," Bailey said, "companies could run the same number of tests with half as many of the preparatory steps."

A patent application has been filed by Bailey and Cox. They are based at the ARS Russell Agricultural Research Center, Athens, Ga.

The new medium contains protein, sugar and salts that the two bacteria need to thrive on. It also contains chemicals called buffers that maintain a stable environment.

Several manufacturers of laboratory chemicals are interested in commercializing the new medium, said Ann Whitehead, ARS patent coordinator, Beltsville, Md. Once licensed to a firm, the medium could be made and sold for use by processors, she said.



“Ready-to-eat meat products such as hot dogs and cold cuts have a ‘zero tolerance’ for Salmonella and Listeria,” Cox said. “That is, they cannot contain either bacterium when they leave the processing plant. Manufacturers of other food products also test for these bacteria to assure that their products are safe.”

After the 24-hour incubation period in the new growth medium, safety tests begin with the culturing of two food samples in a series of other media. These media contain antibiotics and chemicals that don’t affect Salmonella or Listeria, but kill or inhibit other, generally harmless bacteria.

“At the end of the test there should be practically pure cultures of Salmonella or Listeria or both or, hopefully, neither—giving the food sample a clean bill of health,” said Cox.

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## **USDA ANNOUNCES SUGAR MARKETING ASSESSMENT**

WASHINGTON, June 19—A nonrefundable marketing assessment on sugar processed from domestically grown sugar beets and sugarcane was announced today by an official of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Commodity Credit Corporation.

John Stevenson, acting CCC executive vice president, said the assessment is required by amendments to the Agricultural Act of 1949 contained in the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990.

Stevenson said the marketing assessments apply to all first processors of domestically grown sugar beets and sugarcane operating in the 50 states, U.S. territories, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

The marketing assessment will be payable on beet sugar and raw cane sugar or alternative sugar products processed from domestically grown 1991-1995 crops of sugar beets and sugarcane. The assessment is .18 cents per pound on raw cane sugar and .193 cents per pound on beet sugar.

Remittances will be due by the end of the month following the month in which the sugar beets or sugarcane is processed beginning July 1, 1991, and continue through June 30, 1996.

Regulations to implement this provision will appear in the June 19 Federal Register.

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## **USDA REISSUES LICENSE FOR BACTERIN TO VACCINATE DOGS AGAINST LYME'S DISEASE**

WASHINGTON, June 19—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has reissued the conditional license of an Iowa firm to manufacture and sell a bacterin to vaccinate dogs against Lyme's disease, a bacterial infection spread by ticks. The conditional license expires June 14, 1992.

"The licensee previously had a one-year conditional license for the product," said James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. We are reissuing the license to allow the manufacturer to collect additional data on the performance of the product under field conditions."

Glosser said the manufacturer, Ft. Dodge Laboratories, Ft. Dodge, Iowa, a division of American Home Products Corporation, conducted several laboratory studies with the product, known technically as *Borrelia burgdorferi* Bacterin.

In the trials, groups of vaccinated dogs and unvaccinated dogs were intentionally exposed to Lyme's disease. Results showed vaccinated dogs developed fewer clinical signs of illness, such as lameness, fever, loss of appetite, depression and Lyme's disease bacteria in the blood.

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## **MADIGAN SIGNS AGREEMENT TO SPEED PRODUCTION OF ANTICANCER DRUG**

WASHINGTON, June 19—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today signed a cooperative agreement with representatives of Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. to speed production of the anticancer drug taxol from the bark of Pacific yew trees harvested from National Forest System lands.



In addition to the cooperative agreement, Madigan signed an interim rule that doubles the reward to \$10,000 for information leading to the apprehension of individuals who steal Pacific yew bark from national forests.

“The National Cancer Institute has called for rapid acceleration of taxol production,” Madigan said. “The cooperative agreement and interim rule we sign today enable us to proceed with collection of Pacific yew bark while at the same time protecting forest ecosystems and the long-term viability of the species.”

In recent clinical trials sponsored by the National Cancer Institute, taxol has shown promising results in treating ovarian cancer. Taxol may also prove useful in treatment of other forms of cancer, including breast, lung and colon cancers.

The drug currently is produced primarily from the bark of the Pacific yew, which exists in greatest concentration on public lands in the western United States. Most of these lands are managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service. Bristol-Myers Squibb will extract taxol from the bark of yews harvested from national forests under a cooperative research and development agreement awarded competitively to the company by NCI.

Under the agreement between USDA and Bristol-Myers Squibb, the company will cooperate with the Forest Service in implementing a comprehensive management plan for the Pacific yew on national forest land. In addition, Bristol-Myers Squibb will provide funds to inventory Pacific yew on National Forest System lands; develop Pacific yew conservation guidelines; conduct conservation biology research; and support all phases of bark collection and delivery.

The NCI currently estimates that 750,000 pounds of Pacific yew bark are needed this year to produce enough taxol for its clinical trials to proceed. This amount of bark will allow production of about 25 kilograms of pure taxol—enough to treat about 12,500 cancer patients.

To meet this objective, bark must be removed from approximately 38,000 yew trees. According to preliminary Forest Service estimates, about 23 million Pacific yew trees exist on national forest land in western Oregon and Washington alone.

NCI further estimates that 750,000 pounds of bark will be needed each year for the next several years.

Madigan said the goals of the management plan for the Pacific Yew are to ensure long-term survival of the species and to minimize the ecological



impacts of harvesting, consistent with the conduct of this life-saving research.

The Secretary also noted that in recent weeks thieves have stolen at least 5,500 pounds of yew bark from national forests in Oregon, Idaho and Washington, in unlawful attempts to profit from the current taxol shortage.

“We will not tolerate these thefts of an important public resource,” Madigan warned. “USDA will seek full criminal prosecution of any individuals caught illegally removing Pacific yew materials from the National Forest System.”

USDA’s Office of Inspector General, Forest Service law enforcement personnel, and state and local law enforcement agencies are continuing investigations of the thefts.

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